



# PHONICS INTERVENTIONS

## A SOUNDS-WRITE SYMPOSIUM

### **Caroline Hardisty - Sounds-Write Showcase: UK and Europe**

**[00:00:06.14] - Caroline Hardisty**

Hello everyone, and welcome to this Sounds-Write Showcase for the UK, Europe, and international schools that follow an English curriculum. My name is Caroline Hardisty, and I'm a UK-based Sounds-Write Literacy Specialist. I'm delighted to be here to tell you more about Sounds-Write, our training, and some exciting new developments that are coming soon for schools in these areas. At Sounds-Write, our mission is to improve the life chances of children by ensuring that they become proficient readers and writers. And we believe that teacher knowledge is key to achieving this mission. So we provide top quality evidence-informed training for educators to teach reading and spelling effectively. So what is Sounds-Write? Sounds-Write is a linguistic phonics program, which means that Sounds-Write is based on and structured around the sounds of speech. As a species, we've been communicating orally for 100,000 years, and communicating in your native language is known as biologically primary knowledge. Children acquire it naturally, so it doesn't need to be taught. On the other hand, a writing system is a human invention, which was invented around 5,000 years ago to represent speech. As humans, we have an instinct to acquire language, but we do not have an instinct to acquire literacy.

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A writing system is biologically secondary knowledge, and we need to teach it. So at Sounds-Write, we start with what children acquire naturally, the sounds of their language, and we teach them how to read and write those sounds. So Linguistic Phonics is sound-led rather than code or spelling-led. We work from speech to print. At Sounds-Write, we have some guiding principles. We teach the essential phonemic awareness skills required to become proficient readers and spellers. We teach the core conceptual knowledge required, and we teach all the common representations for the sounds of English in the context of real words. So what are those essential skills? Well, there are three essential phonemic awareness skills, segmenting, blending, and phoneme manipulation, and these are taught very explicitly and practiced in the context of reading and spelling words in every Sounds-Write lesson from the very beginning of the program. The conceptual knowledge teaches children how our alphabet

code works. It's no good just teaching them what the code is. They need to understand how it works. So we teach these four pieces of conceptual knowledge throughout the program. We are consistent in our language throughout. From the very beginning, we teach that letters or combinations of letters spell sounds.

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They don't make or say sounds, so as not to undermine this key conceptual understanding. Let's talk a bit more about the Sounds-Write approach itself. Sounds-Write is a highly structured synthetic phonics program. Designed for a whole class teaching of reading and spelling or for interventions. It's highly structured in the sense that we teach from simple to complex, the roughly 175 ways of spelling the 44 or so sounds in English. Sounds-Write is a cumulative program. Everything we teach builds on what has been taught previously. So we are constantly revisiting and revising, and there are multiple opportunities to practice. Sounds-Write is multisensory. So students say the sounds, they see the spellings of the sounds, they hear the sounds, they write the spellings, and all those senses are interacting to enhance the connection between speech and print. Sounds-Write builds from simple to complex. We start with what's very simple, and we build on it in small steps towards what is more complex. That's across the scope and sequence of the program and within the units and within the lessons. Sounds-Write teaches both reading and spelling in every single lesson. They develop in parallel, and many schools actually report seeing a huge leap in spelling ability almost as soon as they start implementing the program.

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Sounds-Write is designed to start at the beginning of reception in England and primary one in Scotland, all the way through the primary years and beyond into the secondary years, all the time employing the same consistent approach. So whether you're teaching 'mat' to a four-year-old or 'chlorophyll' to a 10-year-old, we use the same language and the same error corrections when students make mistakes. Let's finish this introduction to the program by talking about what makes Sounds-Write different. As well as teaching code knowledge, as all phonics programs do, we also teach conceptual knowledge. We teach children how the code works. We also have a strong skills emphasis. Children are automatic in segmenting, blending, and phoneme manipulation right from the very early stages. We always teach sounds in the context of words and not in isolation. This makes the learning much more meaningful and makes children readers and writers right from the start. We teach sounds with all their alternative spellings together, not in isolation. We explicitly teach polysyllabic words. We teach you how to respond to student errors, using them as teaching opportunities to provide students with the missing piece of information that they need in order to complete the puzzle for themselves.

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Something that makes Sounds-Write very different is our emphasis on subject knowledge. At Sounds-Write, our mission is to improve the life chances of children by ensuring that they become proficient readers and spellers. And as I mentioned, we believe that teachers knowledge is key to achieving this mission. And that's why we provide top quality evidence-informed training for educators. Sounds-Write is built on what cognitive science and the science of reading and learning tell us about how students learn best, and our training includes all of this. We want you to be a really knowledgeable practitioner, and this doesn't stop at the end of the course. At Sounds-Write, we provide lots of ongoing professional development for all our practitioners. I'd like to share about how you can train with Sounds-Write if you are located in the UK, Europe, or if you work in an international school that follows an English curriculum. Our training is delivered assuming little or no prior knowledge on the part of the trainees, and it provides practitioners with a theoretical overview of the program and its founding principles, as well as a solid understanding of how our alphabet code is structured and how to teach it.

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We model all of the Sounds-Write lessons. We take you through the clear teaching sequence from the very beginning of the code, and we show you how to teach through the errors that you will encounter in a very positive and supportive way. The training also includes videos of Sounds-Write teaching in whole class, small group, and one-to-one contexts. We give advice and recommendations for decodable readers and how to choose appropriate texts for children, and we also give guidance on lesson planning. Training in Sounds-Write is now exclusively available through our annual membership, launching in September 2025 for all schools in the UK, Europe, and international schools that follow an English curriculum. The membership provides our comprehensive high-quality Sounds-Write training, fully online and on demand, making this an extremely flexible way to train. Everyone in school will have access to the training for as long as the school remains a member. The training will be modular, meaning that staff will be able to complete it in bite-sized chunks at their own pace around the other demands of work and life. Each member of staff will have their own training pathway. These are carefully curated course collections tailored to different teaching roles for a more personalized phonics training experience.

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In this way, classroom support assistants, interventionists, teachers of different year groups, phonics leads, and senior leaders will be able to access the right training to suit the requirements of their role. The training pathways have been designed by eLearning experts working in close partnership with school practitioners and literacy specialists. The phonics lead will receive the most comprehensive training to ensure the effective implementation of Sounds-Write in your school. The phonics lead will also be able to monitor the progress of their entire team as they complete their training pathways to provide support where necessary. You can find out more about membership plans and prices and sign up for the membership on the Sounds-Write website. Earlier this year, we announced the new Sounds-Write Accreditation Program. This program recognizes schools that demonstrate a commitment to continuously improving their Sounds-Write teaching and share Sounds-Write's vision of improving the life chances of children by ensuring that they become proficient readers and writers. We are thrilled to congratulate our first UK and international schools on their accreditation. To find out more about the benefits of becoming an accredited Sounds-Write School, about the accreditation program, and to locate schools in your area, please visit the Sounds-Write website.

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Sounds-Write also offers training and resources for those in a very wide range of settings. Have a look at our brand new web page for Home Educators. It has some great information for families who are looking to give their children a solid foundation in reading and spelling. Be sure to check out the case studies and recorded webinars for Home Educators as well. We are excited to announce that we are launching a nursery course in the autumn. The Sounds-Write Nursery course equips practitioners to lay the foundation for literacy before formal phonics begins in reception. It focuses on building children's phonemic awareness through segmenting, blending, and phoneme manipulation, while introducing the concept that letters represent sounds. The course offers practical guidance on fostering language development, phonological awareness, and early phonics skills, empowering nursery practitioners to effectively implement Sounds-Write in their setting. We also proudly offer a range of specialist courses for those that have already trained in Sounds-Write and want to deepen their knowledge and understanding of specific areas. Trained practitioners can find more information on the courses in the Practitioners portal in the Professional Development tab. We have published a book of case studies in which schools and other practitioners share how they have implemented Sounds-Write in their settings, the results they have achieved, and their recommendations for how best to implement the program.

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The book can be downloaded for free. In addition to the Book of Case Studies, we have a collection of case studies on the website, Success Stories page, which showcases how Sounds-Write is used in a variety of settings to improve student outcomes. Be sure to have a look at our growing number of case studies from the UK and around the world. You can find the case study on the Success Stories page of our website. Make sure you're signed up for the Phonics Toolkit, the monthly newsletter from Sounds-Write. Here, you will receive regular updates on Sounds-Write news, offers, and literacy Insights. Be sure to sign up so you don't miss anything Sounds-Write related. You can sign up for the newsletter by visiting the contact page on the Sounds-Write website. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me through the Sounds-Write web page enquiries or email me at the address on the screen. I'm always happy to chat about all things Sounds-Write. Thank you for joining me today to hear about the Sounds-Write program, about our training, and about what is new at Sounds-Write. I hope to hear from you soon.